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The Nullification Movement in Georgia¹

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The doctrine of nullification is best known in connection with South Carolina. It might not be so had the movement started under other circumstances or leadership. The conditions producing the movement and bringing it to a head in South Carolina were common to the Southern States; but nullification as the remedy for the evils complained of was not accepted throughout the South. This was due in some extent to the precipitate course pursued by South Carolina in not acting in conjunction and consultation with the other Southern States. An attempt to approach the doctrine through the united action and accord of the Southern States assembled in a convention would have come much nearer success, both in the adoption of nullification and in its effectiveness as a remedy against the tariff. But when the supreme test came, South Carolina found herself acting alone.

Of all the other Southern States, Georgia was considered the best ground for the doctrine to thrive and develop in. Many interpreted Georgia's long-standing course with the Federal Government regarding the Indian question as virtual nullification. Whether this were true or not, the distinction, apart from other considerations, was rather difficult for the ordinary voter to discern. That Georgia did not nullify, and that she did not do it even before South Carolina did, bespeaks her strong attachment for the Union.

By 1824 Georgia as well as most of the Southern States had come to believe that no good could result from the tariff for the South. The tariff bill of that year received the solid

1. Presented at the fourth annual meeting of the Georgia Historical Association, May 22, 1920.

opposition of her delegation in Congress. Within a few years the North had united in its support of protection, and in 1828 the tariff law, commonly called the "tariff of abominations," was passed. The South now gradually waking up to the fact that protection was to be a permanent policy of the Federal Government, bitterly opposed the law. This realization was serious and burned deep. The Georgia Legislature passed a set of resolutions in the same year, condemning the tariff law as "deceptive in its title, fraudulent in its pretexts, oppressive in its exactions, partial and unjust in its operations, unconstitutional in its well known objects, ruinous to commerce and agriculture—to secure a hateful monopoly to a combination of importunate manufacturers."^{1a} As a remedy the Georgia House resolved that if Congress failed to grant redress, a committee should be appointed to represent the State in a convention of the Southern States "to deliberate upon and devise a suitable mode of resistance to that unjust, unconstitutional and oppressive law."²

The attitude of the State was ever the same regarding the viciousness of the tariff, regardless of the time or the occasion. The remedy was the all-absorbing question—on this alone the parties differed. Governor Forsyth counselled that efforts be directed toward repealing the law rather than attempting to nullify it.³ With the conservative elements in control of the Legislature at this time, resolutions demanding "measures of decisive character, for the protection of the people of the State, and the vindication of the Constitution of the United States" were considered too radical and were promptly laid on the table.⁴ However, numerous anti-tariff meetings sprang up throughout the State, contenting themselves generally in merely resolving against the tariff.⁵

During the succeeding years from 1828 to 1832, the political elements were beginning to arrange themselves with some degree of clarity on the question of nullification—a question

1a. *Niles' Weekly Register* (Edited by Hezekiah Niles at Baltimore), Vol. 30, p. 340.

2. H. V. Ames, *State Documents on Federal Relations* (Philadelphia, 1906), 153, 154.

3. U. B. Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights* (Washington, 1902), 117, 118.

4. *Athenian* (Edited by O. P. Shaw at Athens, strongly State rights, but not to the limits of nullification), Dec. 23, 1828.

5. *Ibid.*, July 15, Aug. 26, 1828; Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 117, 118.

which was becoming more and more a subject of discussion. Georgia's political parties and politics at this time are too complicated to be untangled here. The removal of the Cherokee Indians, and all the attendant problems, served to detract attention from nullification. Parties were based on men and not on measures. The Troup party made up of the more aristocratic elements leaned more toward State Rights, while the Clark party with its following of small farmers and frontiersmen was considered to have had a stronger attachment to the Union. But very often these proclivities were thrown away when it came to a question of deserting a leader. All of which led Hezekiah Niles (editor of *Niles' Register*) to say, "We know not what they differ about—but they do *violently* differ."⁶ The majority of the Legislature during most of this period was of the Clark party. In the session of 1830, it passed its customary resolutions denouncing the tariff; but resolved that the people of Georgia "view with deep and increasing solicitude the frequent and open expression of opinion, unfriendly to the continuance of our present happy Union. . . . It is firmly believed that disunion will bring in its train discord, misery, and CIVIL WAR; and finally, that the people of this State will deem those unworthy of their confidence, and their worst enemies, who seek to sow among them the seeds of disunion, and introduce the baneful doctrines of nullification."⁷ The State Rights element denounced these resolutions as not representing Georgia, but only the Clark party.

As time passed the "tariff of abominations" continued to grow in unpopularity. The Georgia House in 1831 by an overwhelming majority expressed its sentiments against the tariff as "inexpedient, oppressive, unequal, and destructive to the great leading interests of the South." It yielded to no one in its bitter denunciations. But as to the remedy for the evil, the case was far different. Resolutions were decisively defeated in the House by a vote of 87 to 26, declaring that a State had the right to judge for itself on the constitutionality of an act of Congress "and to act upon the mode as well as

6. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 41, p. 150.

7. *Athenian*, Dec. 7, 1830. This resolution passed the Senate, 37-32.

the measure of its redress," and that "it is a question not of right . . . but a question of expediency, having exclusive references to the consequences which may grow out of the exercise of that right."⁸ This was a complete rout for those inclined to nullification doctrines. The *Richmond Whig* declared this to be "among the phenomena of the times. . . . And who is it that rejects them? Georgia, of all others, the State, which besides that she has ever professed these doctrines, is the only one that has practically enforced them! Under what influence has she thus acted? Fear of the *name* of nullification—not the *thing*—for that Georgia loves and practices—but fear of the name, and a wish not to injure gen. Jackson. Never was there a more lucky hit, than christening the doctrines contended for by S. Carolina *nullification*."⁹ The Senate unanimously passed a set of resolutions favoring the re-election of Jackson, and condemning Calhoun for his doctrines especially "on the subject of nullification."¹⁰

The almost unanimity of opinion of this Legislature, necessarily could not represent the same state of mind outside. However, in the face of this stand for the Union, many people throughout the State were deeply influenced. Outright nullification was too radical to be boldly embraced at this time by any important group, but there was a considerable trend in that direction. A correspondent to the *Athenian* wrote that should the North and the West continue in their course, "the time will then come, and it is with feelings of awful import, and a sensation that almost causes my pen to fall from my hand, while I write it,—'*it will be time for Georgia to calculate the value of the Union*'."¹¹ The Troup party was undoubtedly much more impatient with the tariff than was the Clark party. Ex-Governor Troup was bitter against the protected manufacturer: "The many-headed tyrant, in the habitual violation of the Constitution, vaunts his love of the Union, as if ready to make a burnt-offering of his looms and spindles upon the altar of the Union—yet, not one jot of concession is made to the prayers and intreaties,

8. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 41, p. 392.

9. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 41, p. 392.

10. *Ibid.*, 272.

11. *Athenian*, June 8, 1830.

which, if offered to the throne of Grace, would be received graciously and answered favorably."¹² The election of 1831, with all the customary confusion of men rather than issues, resulted in the choice of Wilson Lumpkin as governor. He represented the sentiment against nullification, although all of those who voted for him cannot be said to have had similar sentiments. His subsequent course through two succeeding terms, shows his decided attitude against that doctrine. He also gradually crystallized around himself a party of like views. At this time the Clark party was charged with accusing Troup of drunkenness while "studiously complemeting" Webster. But the evils of the tariff were "small sufferings to the people in the eyes of the Clark leaders to what they themselves suffer in being deprived of the honor and emoluments of office—of the loaves and fishes of the public treasury; and rather than act in concert with the Troup party in the least particular, they will embrace the vampire who is sucking their blood, and support doctrines which are inflicting worse than Egyptian bondage upon us."¹³

But some far-seers believed the remedy against the tariff to be found outside of politics. Knowing that the present national policy on the tariff was induced by industrial conditions in the North, they decided that the remedy lay in suiting Southern economic conditions to protection. They would, therefore, diversify the products of the soil and engage in manufacturing. They believed "'Disunion' sounds harsh when not justified by the strongest necessity."¹⁴ Governor Troup in his message to the Legislature in 1827 recommended that it address all the Southern States of like interests with Georgia and "suggest the expediency of concurring in a non-consumptive agreement to be carried into effect by all the means that are constitutionally given to their respective legislatures."¹⁵ The corollary was that the South should manufacture for herself. The *Athenian* declared that the South should "now awake from her lethargy and reap the advantages of protection to manufacturies, if such a system affords

12. E. J. Harden, *The Life of George M. Troup* (Savannah, 1859), 511.

13. *Athenian*, June 15, 1830.

14. Editorial in *Athenian*, May 9, 1828; Feb. 22, 1828.

15. Ames, *State Documents*, 146.

any, and throw back the evil upon those who advocate an unequal distribution of national favours—then and not till then will its impolicy be felt.”¹⁶ The students of the University of Georgia condemned the “tariff of abominations” and resolved to use for their apparel “to the greatest possible extent, goods manufactured in the southern states.” They invited the faculty and the citizens of the State generally to join in these intentions.¹⁷ At a subsequent meeting of the board of trustees, it was decided that the University students should clothe themselves in “Georgia homespun.”¹⁸ It soon became popular to declare for home-made products, and to refuse all use, as far as possible, of materials not made in the South. Many toasts at the Fourth of July celebrations of 1828 expressed sentiments for peace and industry, as “South Carolina—Let her convert her swords into spindles, and her spears into shuttles, and prepare for peace”; “The Tariff—It is time for every noble Lucretia to turn from the piano to the distaff, we will pay them homage when they have clothed us in homespun.”¹⁹ The movement was one of protest rather than of permanent policy. No one expected that it would be possible or even desirable to do more than provide for home consumption. As the insufficient amount of homespun would have to be supplemented by the factory-made, the establishment of cotton and woollen factories became the immediate object.

Looking toward this accomplishment, in August of 1828, a meeting of more than a thousand persons was held in the chapel of the University of Georgia. William H. Crawford was made chairman; Senator Berrien, Judge Clayton, and Wilson Lumpkin were among those present. A protest against the tariff was passed and at the same time a recommendation was made that the State set to work to manufacture what she needed. As an aid to the patriotic intentions of some who might waver, it was suggested that the State lay an excise tax on goods coming into the State.²⁰ In a short time

16. March 21, 1828.

17. *Ibid.*, July 1, 1828.

18. *Ibid.*, Dec. 9.

19. *Ibid.*, July 22.

20. *Athenian*, Aug. 12, 1828.

tangible results were beginning to appear from this agitation. Jefferson County sent a man north in July of 1828 to study the mysteries of manufacturing. About the same time a cotton and woolen factory in Richmond County received pledges of \$8,000 during the first hour the subscription books were opened.²¹ The first cotton mill to be put into operation was at Athens. This was in 1829. Many Georgians looked on these new ventures with misgivings. Some feared their financial failure; others feared that the State might be running after false gods and that it might lose "the faith of the fathers." These enterprises were not started to working until thorough political explanations for their existence had been given. The editor of the *Athenian* said the gentlemen who were setting up the Athens mill had done something "against which their political convictions are most unquestionably at war. And we are authorized to state, that these sentiments have, by no means, undergone a change; that their project is certainly not to give countenance to a system which they have always denounced; but it is to be regarded as a measure unquestionably defensive."²² To others these attempts to manufacture were welcomed "provided it does not tend to the adoption of those principles of the 'American System'."²³

But this movement was destined from the beginning to be ineffective as a remedy against the tariff. However, it gave some people a field for thought and effort, who otherwise might have spent their time resolving against the evils of protection. Some definite action by the State of Georgia was gradually becoming the desire of a considerable number of people. The exact nature of this action was, by no means, clear. Calhoun's doctrine of nullification had been receiving much attention from the South Carolinians, and it was becoming more probable as time went on that they would make use of it. South Carolina believed Georgia's course with the Federal Government in dealing with the Indians, pointed to the remedy. They professed to believe that this was the successful application of their doctrine of nullification. Regard-

21. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1828.

22. *Athenian*, March 31, 1829.

23. *Georgian* (A daily published at Savannah, supporting the Troup party, standing for the Union and against nullification), March 20, 1829.

less of the identity of this action with nullification, it was successful; and South Carolina believed that the application of her doctrine would meet with the same success.²⁴ She, therefore, in numerous unofficial ways suggested that Georgia embrace this method as a solution for the tariff. Some Georgians early fell in with this idea, especially under the leadership of the *Augusta Chronicle*. The editor declared "it is utterably impossible for a man to approve the course of Georgia, in relation to the Supreme Court, and not be a nullifier, as for him to live, and not be a human being. . . ." ²⁵ Many South Carolinians argued that nullification was really originated by Jefferson and, therefore, it represented no break with good State Rights doctrine. That Jefferson's views led to nullification was thoroughly disproved at the time.²⁶ Governor Lumpkin denied that Georgia's course with the Supreme Court over the Indian question had any connection whatsoever with nullification.²⁷ The great majority of Georgians sternly refused to admit that they had been guilty of nullifying Federal action. Governor Gilmer in 1831 stated very concisely the difference between Georgia's course and nullification: "Georgia has claimed no right to nullify, (in the verbiage of the day,) the acts of the general government, and only demands an exemption from attempts to control its authority whilst exercised upon such subjects as are within its exclusive jurisdiction."²⁸ Whether these subjects were really within her exclusive jurisdiction or not, does not affect the question—Georgia's action was based on the understanding that they were. Nullification laid claims to no such basis.

Georgians were not yet widely agitating the question of nullification. The editor of the *Georgia Messenger* in the early part of 1832 regretted that "Some how or other, the people of Georgia are unaccountably listless upon a subject of momentous importance, as that, which is agitating our

24. *Congressional Debates*, 22 Cong., 2 sess., 453, 454 (1832-1833).

25. *Augusta Chronicle* (A semi-weekly published at Augusta by A. H. Pemberton, an out-and-out nullification paper), May 26, Sept. 5, 1832.

26. Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years' View* (New York, 1857), I, 148, 149.

27. Wilson Lumpkin, *The Removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia* (MS first published, New York, 1907), I, 125.

28. *Georgia Constitutionalist* (Published twice a week in Augusta by Gieu and Bunce, a high-toned, comprehensive paper, against nullification, and with a strong hatred of South Carolina), Aug. 3, 1832.

neighboring State—Nullification is the sole engrossing subject in a State from which we are separated only by the line of a river, while in Georgia, we seldom hear the subject discussed.”²⁹ But South Carolina lost no opportunity to interest Georgians. A “State Rights and Free Trade Association” convention was held in Charleston on February 22, 1832, to which many Georgians were invited.³⁰ A more direct move in this propaganda was the Hamburg dinner given to Governor Hamilton of South Carolina, with its aftermath, the Augusta dinner. The former took place in May of 1832 in the town of Hamburg (South Carolina), with a large number of Georgians present. The dinner soon resolved itself into a nullification meeting, with most of the Georgians willing pupils. One Georgian, however, upset the harmony with the following toast: “In monarchies, the minority rules the majority; but in all good Republics, the majority *must* rule the minority.”³¹ This meeting was widely held to be a bold step on the part of South Carolina to further nullification doctrines in Georgia. It was styled by one, “a fruitless electioneering barbecue”; but the feeling among those present was that a *cordiale entente* had been cemented, evidenced in this toast: “Georgia and South Carolina—What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”³² The dinner at Augusta was given soon afterwards, to the South Carolina governor with a large number of South Carolinians present. This was to be the Georgia nullifiers’ answer to the nullification bid held out at Hamburg. With more than two thousand people present, this was made a veritable love feast. The coats of arms of South Carolina and Georgia were deftly interwoven in the hall decorations, “the Palmetto-tree leaning over on the right, & the Pine-tree on the left.” Throughout the hall “were suspended numerous inscriptions, or mottoes, expressive of the doctrines of Nullification, painted

29. *Georgia Messenger* (A weekly, published at Macon, with nullification leanings), March 10, 1832.

30. *Augusta Chronicle*, March 7 1832.

31. *Georgian*, June 2, 1832. After this toast no cheers followed and not a glass was raised. Some hisses were heard. This toast was sent to the meeting by a sympathizer: “The Southern States—If all their *Governors* were *Hamiltons* and *Troops*, we should never be menaced with the *United States Troops*.”

32. *Georgian*, June 2, 1832; *Georgia Constitutionalist*, June 22, 1832.

in different colors, on white canvas, framed.³³ This meeting was early attacked by those opposed to nullification, as a link in the chain that was to bind Georgia to South Carolina in her mad attempt to destroy the Union. The *Georgia Courier* wished "joy of the good things they may collect at the proposed feast, for their days, like 'the days of the wicked' in general, are few and short."³⁴

One reason why South Carolina was not bolder and more open in her campaign in Georgia was the knowledge that her reputation for friendship for that State in the past was not high. In the presidential campaign of 1824 Crawford and Calhoun had with their respective States strongly opposed each other. Georgia also remembered Calhoun's lack of sympathy for her on the Indian question. It was, therefore, immediately charged against the Georgia nullification sympathizers that they had as their leader "a man who has been, and still is, a bitter enemy of Georgia, and who has done more harm to our State, and excited more animosity between the citizens, than any other man in the United States."³⁵ Most Georgians not only resented the attempted leadership of an outsider and an enemy, but they also did not care to "be dragged nor dragooned either into submission to the eastern and western states on the one hand, nor into a tame compliance with all the wild and precipitate movements of South Carolina on the other. Georgia's best affections are with the Union, and she wishes to preserve it if possible. . . . She must be suffered to be mistress of her own movements, and the judge of the time and manner when and how to resist the measures that now oppress her."³⁶ This admonition was uttered for the benefit of all comers. More particularly, "She has not waited for Carolina to tell her of her own wrongs, or to prompt her to her duty. But, when, with honied words, Carolina would wheedle her into such a measure as Nullification, she will exercise discretion and beg to be excused."³⁷ The *Georgia Constitutionalist* pointedly advised South Carolinians to keep themselves at home, and desist

33. *Augusta Chronicle*, June 2, 1832.

34. *Ibid.*, May 19.

35. *Georgia Constitutionalist*, Aug. 19, 1832.

36. *Athenian*, Oct. 12, 1830.

37. Editorial in *Georgian*, Aug. 23, 1832.

from meddling in Georgia politics, and that if nullification was so pleasing a prospect, they should keep it at home and enjoy it to the fullest extent. "Georgia is not missionary ground in politics," it said, "for any sect. . . . She is content. If others have made a happier discovery, in the art of government, she wishes them joy of it; but is not disposed herself, to commence a new apprenticeship, under any professor, however distinguished."³⁸ South Carolina was charged with doing much more harm than good to herself and to the South generally.³⁹

A persistent element headed by the *Augusta Chronicle* took up the campaign for South Carolina and nullification, and worked with ceaseless vigor in spreading the doctrine. They considered enlightenment was all that was necessary. Large numbers of pamphlets and speeches, mostly by South Carolinians, were scattered over the State. As for these nullification doctrines, they declared "It is really astonishing how little they are understood, how much they are abused by those who do not understand them, and how readily they are adopted by those who have opposed them, the moment they comprehend them. I have not met with one opposed to them that fairly understood them."⁴⁰ To dispel the wide-spread fears that nullification would lead to civil war and anarchy, the propagandists argued that it could "in no event, produce any thing worse than disunion. . . ."⁴¹ A great reduction in the price of every-day necessities was promised, if South Carolina should nullify the tariff. Hence, Georgia should encourage and uphold that State, even, if she, herself, did not see fit to follow. Charleston would be a free port for Georgia as well as for South Carolina. It was claimed that then salt

38. May 8, 1832. The *Georgia Courier* carried on a constant and bitter campaign of criticism against South Carolina.

39. The *Georgia Messenger*, March 10, 1832, said, ". . . the State of South Carolina, assuming to herself the championship of State Rights, and professing to be the most democratic State in the Union, has, under the supreme domination of a selfish and ambitious oligarchy, prejudiced the very cause she has professed to support, and impaired the accomplishment of what we are so anxious to obtain—a reduction of oppressive duties."

40. *Augusta Chronicle*, Aug. 25, May 12, 1832. The editor of the *Chronicle* claimed to have been an original nullifier, holding such opinions even before Calhoun did. May 7, 1832.

41. *Ibid.*, April 18. The editor charged the *Georgia Chronicle* editor with priding "himself in being among the first to oppose nullification. . . . When was he not among the first to oppose anything in support of the interests, honor, character, institutions, or liberties of the State in which he was born." March 24, 1832.

could be had for 12 to 15 cents a bushel instead of 75 cents; that iron would be 2 cents a pound instead of 6, and that calico would be 9 cents a yard instead of 16 and 20. Other articles would be reduced in the same proportions.⁴² In the face of these arguments, the opposition beat back with equal vigor. They charged the nullification sympathizers with chicanery and inconsistency. At one time nullification was held up as an old friend whom Georgia had been making use of for years; and at another time, it was claimed that few Georgians really understood nullification, and that as soon as they did, they were for it.

But events were fast drawing the question to a head. In July of 1832, a new tariff bill was passed with certain supposed concessions to the South, but still continuing unabated the principle of protection.⁴³ The discontented everywhere considered the time had now come to act. A train of events was set in motion in Georgia which was to decide the future course of the State. The occasion for the beginning was afforded by the gathering in August of politicians from throughout the State that annually took place at the commencement exercises of the University of Georgia in Athens. The political elements were fast shaping themselves on the absorbing issue of nullification. The following notice appeared in the town: "The friends of Gen. Jackson, and those opposed to the *Protective System*, and opposed to a redress of Tariff grievances by *Nullification*, as the mode of relief, are requested to attend at the New Chapel, To-Morrow, at 4 o'clock, P. M." The nullifiers fearful of what might be the outcome of this meeting, were quick to act. They decided to work a strategem, by issuing a call for a meeting at the same time and place, with the intentions of capturing the organization. They posted notices requesting "All persons whatever who feel interested in the subject, without regard to any party, or present opinions . . . to attend at the New Chapel" to discuss the "evils of the Protective System" and to determine methods of redress.⁴⁴

42. *Banner of the Constitution* (Published in Philadelphia as a free trade or low tariff journal), Sept. 12, 1832.

43. It was claimed that the South would be relieved of about \$3,000,000 on account of certain reductions in this bill.

44. *Banner of the Constitution*, Aug. 22, 1832.

The faction which had made the first call for the meeting, by appearing early, secured the chapel and without parliamentary action, their pre-arranged organization took control with William H. Crawford in the chair. The second faction soon appeared with numbers so great that they swamped the meeting. Under the leadership of John M. Berrien and Judge A. S. Clayton, they soon had complete control and proceeded to vote through their resolutions and program for future action. Clayton introduced a set of resolutions severely condemning the tariff and calling on the counties throughout the State to elect delegates to a convention to meet in Milledgeville "and to invest them with full powers, in behalf of the good People of Georgia, to maintain, preserve, and defend the rights and privileges of the free citizens of this State." A Committee of Correspondence was appointed to confer with other States "on all matters connected with our common interest." Clayton and Berrien, among others, were members of this committee. Thus, there was to be common action with other States, if possible—and on this much hope for success was based.⁴⁵ The Athens resolutions were sent to the different Southern States with the statement that "It is only by convincing our Northern brethren of our *united* determination to resist the PROTECTIVE SYSTEM" that the evils may be averted. A circular letter was also sent to all the counties in the State asking them to hold elections in October, at the same time as the Congressional elections, to choose delegates to the Milledgeville convention.⁴⁶ They were admonished to lay all differences "on the altar of patriotism."⁴⁷ These proceedings were stern evidence that as far as the Athens meeting was concerned, the stage of resolving against the tariff was over. A self-constituted body of men were here using the legal machinery of the State to hold an election for a convention, which was extra-legal to say the least. This meeting attracted much attention throughout the country, and was considered both by its friends and foes, to be the first direct step toward nullification.⁴⁸ The *Augusta Chronicle* declared

45. *Banner of the Constitution*, Aug. 22, 1832; Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 129.

46. *Banner of the Constitution*, Sept. 5, 1832.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Richmond Enquirer*, Aug. 14, 1832.

that while the movers at Athens "did not aim or desire to secure the adoption of Nullification, they succeeded most triumphantly, pressed to the contest by their opponents, in putting down the opposition to it. Who can doubt that it must ultimately triumph, since it does triumph, so far, wherever it is opposed! Let it be fairly heard by the people, and there is not the least doubt of the result."⁴⁹ The *Richmond Enquirer* asked "Are they for Nullification, or what are they for? And what do they think their fellow citizens are disposed to do in their convention—and will that convention be so organized as to give a free and full expression of the sentiments of Georgia?"⁵⁰

The leaders in this movement believed that the iron was hot and that they must strike immediately for success. The State must be stirred up sufficiently to fall in with their scheme of holding county meetings for the State convention. Soon after the Athens meeting the same leaders directed a great dinner at Lexington in Oglethorpe County in honor of the Georgia Congressmen who voted against the tariff—excluding those who voted for it.⁵¹ It was estimated that more than a thousand people attended. They passed resolutions bitterly criticising the tariff "to which, as free citizens of Georgia, *we ought not, cannot, will not, longer submit.*" These were passed "with the most rapturous *applause.*" A resolution was also passed declaring that in the event of the Federal Government attempting to coerce a State they would "consider her defense, essential to *our safety.*" It was decided to send delegates to the Milledgeville convention. The Lexington and Athens meetings were looked upon with misgivings by the more moderate elements throughout the South.⁵² The *Richmond Enquirer* declared that these meetings were "rash, passionate, and calculated to strike at the tranquility, if not at the integrity of the Union."⁵³

During the next four months there was a more thorough searching of hearts and minds among Georgians than had

49. Quoted in *Banner of the Constitution*, Aug. 22, 1832.

50. Aug. 21, 1832; quoted in *Georgian*, Sept. 6, 1832.

51. Forsyth and Wayne were the two Georgia Congressmen voting for the tariff bill of 1832.

52. *Southern Recorder*, Aug. 16, 1832; Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 129.

53. *Georgian*, Aug. 25, 1832.

been the case during any equal length of time since the foundation of the State. The value of the Union was now being calculated with greater seriousness than ever before. The parting of the ways was at hand. Would Georgia destroy the edifice made possible by the sufferings of the Revolution and built on the political philosophies of Washington and Jefferson to enter onto a course of action whose ultimate result no one could guess? The question of nullification was destined to be settled before the Milledgeville convention met, in the expression of the people's will through these county meetings. Many shades of opinion existed as to the exact course of action that should be pursued. There was a small but persistent group for out-and-out nullification of the South Carolina variety. Others would be willing to follow some definite course of action, but would not go to the limits of nullification. These were in favor for the most part of calling a Southern convention to deal with the question.⁵⁴ The nullifiers had a very difficult position to sustain. They were accused of being for disunion and the logical result—civil war. They were also charged with being enemies of President Jackson and opposed to his re-election. Calhoun and South Carolina, it was said, afforded their leadership and inspiration. Under these attacks the more moderate resented the accusation of being for nullification; they were in favor of giving the people a chance to decide on a course of action in a convention. They, therefore, did not want parties to split on the question of nullification in the pre-convention meetings.⁵⁵ Thereby, they hoped to carry it in the convention—to hand it to the people as the work of the convention and an accomplished fact, and with it stampede the people. They would rather play strong the argument against submission, without naming beforehand the exact remedy. The *Columbus Enquirer* declared "The south will no longer submit. It is time that measures were taken to get rid of its oppressions. Let us then resist at once, in some shape, in such a shape as shall

54. The *Georgia Messenger* said, June 21, 1832, "The crisis is rapidly coming upon us. . . . A conciliatory spirit does not prevail upon our Northern brethren. . . . What remedy offers itself—Nullification?—South Carolina Nullification?—By no means—We are now as much as ever averse to such a recourse. . . ." A convention of all the Southern States was considered to be the proper method.

55. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 13, *passim*, 1832.

be most effectual, be that shape what it may—while yet our strength and our resources are not entirely exhausted by exactions—while yet our spirits are not humbled and subdued by the sense of helpless degradation.”⁵⁶ Action of some kind was necessary immediately. “Petitions, remonstrances and protests, and even threats have been made for years—and what has been the result?” asks the same paper.⁵⁷

Many refused to embrace nullification as a remedy for fear of a civil war.⁵⁸ Large numbers also refused to support the doctrine as it would align them against Jackson.⁵⁹ The more conservative element, considering that Georgia had already shown by resolutions of her Legislature her displeasure over the tariff as well as her opposition to nullification methods, believed these county meetings could not change the position already assumed by the State. The *Georgian* enquired whether “the agitators who have got up these meetings suppose that a few dinner speeches and dinner toasts are to complete such a revolution in Georgia as to make them embrace sentiments they have deliberately condemned, and cause them to hug to their bosoms the man who has been consistent in but one thing in his political life, and that is, an untiring hostility to Georgia and her best interests. When Nullification triumphs in Georgia, then will John C. Calhoun be triumphant, for he is identified with it.”⁶⁰ Not only were the county meetings bad in themselves, but the convention called to meet at Milledgeville was particularly a dangerous procedure. It was assuming a legal position in State affairs which the Legislature alone should hold. It was especially dangerous to the present order on account of the “full powers to act” that were given to it by the call. Such powers could be easily abused. As argued by some, “Those invested with

56. *Columbus Enquirer* (A weekly paper, edited by James N. Bethune at Columbus, Georgia, with strong nullification leanings), April 28, 1832.

57. *Ibid.*, Sept. 15.

58. William H. Crawford, although strongly opposed to nullification, did not think it would produce civil war. He opposed it as not being constitutional. *Banner of the Constitution*, Oct. 31, 1832. Judge A. S. Clayton, a strong nullifier, said, “I advise, then, the most peaceful remedy, and strange as to some it may seem, I advise NULLIFICATION.” *Southern Sentinel* (Greenville, S. C.), July 28, 1832, quoted in *Macon Telegraph* (A weekly published by Myron Bartlett at Macon, Georgia—name changed to *Georgia Telegraph*, Oct. 3, 1832), Aug. 8, 1832.

59. Troup said, “The cause of nullification is so generally connected with hostility to the President, that even if it were more tenable, it would expose to jealousy any politician in Georgia who would seem to favor it.” Harden, *Life of Troup*, 515.

60. *Georgian*, Aug. 23, 1832.

them might nullify the laws both of the Union & of Georgia—they might declare war or proclaim a secession—they might confiscate the estates, or shed the blood of their political opponents.”⁶¹

But the political ardor of the people was so great that meetings began to spring up throughout the State.⁶² The attempted movement of the more conservative element to stave off these meetings altogether, and thereby, prevent the election of delegates, having failed, they decided to do the next best thing. They would advocate the holding of conventions in every county and attempt to capture the organization in every case and use it against nullification. The *Federal Union*, one of the strongest Union papers in the State, came out for this plan.⁶³ The nullifiers naturally attempted to control the meetings to the end of having them declare for nullification. The *Federal Union* declared, “The *three* or *four* leading nullifiers *intended to lay out their strength in the Convention*—and it is for this purpose that Jones, and Clayton, and Berrien have been riding through the State to *inflame* the minds of the people to the right heat.”⁶⁴ The county meetings, following one another in rapid succession, adhered very closely to the same program. Without an exception they declared their hostility to the tariff; but the great majority of them declared specifically against nullification as the remedy. The Walton County meeting is typical on this. It resolved “That we are opposed to Nullification as the mode of redress for our grievances, forasmuch as we consider it neither constitutional nor peaceable, as it must, in the very nature of things, bring us directly in collision with the General Government, and end in a state of open war.”⁶⁵ Most of the meet-

61. Editorial in *Augusta Constitutionalist*, quoted in *Georgian*, Aug. 21, 1832. Also see *Georgian*, Aug. 23.

62. According to the *Macon Telegraph*, Sept. 5, 1832, “Anti-Tariff and Anti-Nullification meetings are becoming so common that if we published the proceedings of all, our paper would contain little else.”

63. The newspapers played a very important part in the nullification movement, both moulding and mirroring public opinion. Appreciating this fact, the Morgan County meeting resolved, “That we rejoice to perceive the leading newspaper editors of this State using their best exertions to enlighten and not inflame the public mind on the subject of Southern suffering. Such a press cannot be intimidated by the intemperate feeling or subsidized by corrupt overtures of any sort.” *Georgian*, Sept. 11, 1832. *Richmond Enquirer*, Aug. 31, 1832.

64. Quoted *ibid.*

65. *Banner of the Constitution*, Sept. 5, 1832. In speaking of these county meetings *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, p. 19, says “. . . the people of Georgia, though opposed to the tariff, appear more opposed to nullification. There had been several great meetings at which this heresy was utterly prostrated.”

ings passed resolutions favoring the re-election of Jackson. However strongly they sympathized with nullification, they were not yet willing to desert the President, even though he had offered the toast: "The Union, it must be preserved." The Camden County meeting which did not recommend Jackson for re-election, was declared to be wholly unrepresentative of the county. The charge was made that it was composed principally of the seven road commissioners, who resolved themselves into the meeting after transacting their usual business.⁶⁶ Another meeting was soon held for this county, which declared that nullification was, after all, a British plot to destroy the United States, and resolved that "the insidious and Siren tongue of Nullification, as it effects the ears of many citizens, is as deceptive, as it would be destructive to our happiness, and ruinous to our country."⁶⁷ Resolutions were frequently passed declaring continued support for and confidence in Forsyth and Wayne, who had voted for the tariff bill of 1832 and who had been so bitterly attacked by the nullifiers. The Richmond County meeting at Augusta declared they "retain our entire confidence in their patriotism, ability and zeal."⁶⁸ Some of the counties were so much opposed to nullification that they refused to send delegates at all. Chatham County called a meeting which opposed nullification and all movements leading in that direction and voted to elect no delegates. Later another meeting was called in Savannah to reconsider. The decision was made final against participating in the Milledgeville procedures.⁶⁹ According to the *Georgian*, "The People of Savannah are like the handle of a pitcher, all 'on one side'," and that "is not the Nullification side."⁷⁰ Other counties believing that they would be playing into the hands of the nullifiers, if they refused to take part in the State convention, decided to elect delegates to go there to combat the heresy, and if nullification were adopted, they were to withdraw from the convention. Pulaski County, as was the case with many others, decided to

66. *Georgian*, Oct. 11, 1832.

67. *Georgian*, Sept. 20, 1832.

68. "These resolutions were carried by vast majorities, approaching unanimity and the denunciation of Nullification was overwhelming." *Ibid.*, Aug. 23.

69. *Ibid.*, Aug. 30, Oct. 11. Forsyth County also refused to send delegates. See *ibid.*, Nov. 16, 1832.

70. *Ibid.*, Aug. 28.

send delegates, but insisted that whatever action should be taken at Milledgeville, should be referred back to the State for ratification. In this way they hoped to block the dangers adhering to the convention's "full powers to act."⁷¹ Pure nullification sentiments were expressed only in a few instances. The Bibb County meeting held in Macon, declared "that the people are sensible of the oppressiveness of their burdens—that they will no longer submit to evils that are no longer sufferable—and that they are willing to adopt the most speedy and practical mode of redress."⁷² Muscogee County, in a dinner invitation to many South Carolinians and Alabamians, declared the tariff "in plain language is NULL AND VOID."⁷³ The grand jury of the same county presented the tariff as a grievance and declared that "resistance may save us, submission will not avert the evil."⁷⁴

A few other counties were bellicose in their attitude; but the great majority of them stood strongly for the Union, at the same time roundly denouncing the tariff evils.⁷⁵ The nullification propagandists were early declared to have met with failure. According to the *Macon Telegraph*, "Their repulse in Twiggs, Jones, Baldwin, & &, must have astonished these travelling preachers." It continued, "The Disunionists are wonderfully cooled down, of late. They find the thing does not take as they anticipated. The people are yet too stubborn, to be led by the nose, blindfolded, into such a business. And those at first so loud, so warm, in the cause of nullification, now begin to sing small. They have no idea of war and bloodshed—their resistance is all peaceable—a civil war they have not thought of—a separation of the states they do not wish for."⁷⁶ The *Federal Union* enthusiastically interpreted

71. *Georgian*, Sept. 25, 1832. The *Macon Telegraph* denounced the convention and counselled the people to have nothing to do with it: "As it cannot be a full one—as it will not be a fair one—as it will be illegal—as it will be incompetent to afford any relief—it will be safer to leave the matter altogether to the Legislature, whose members will be elected at the same time, and will be equally well acquainted with the feelings and wishes of the people on the subject. If the Nullifiers want a convention, let them have one; but the Union men should have nothing to do with it." Sept. 5, 1832.

72. *Banner of the Constitution*, Sept. 5, 1832.

73. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 6, 1832. At this meeting, hoping to shake off the South Carolina stigma, they declared they stood for nullification as Jefferson argued it, and not in the way Calhoun would have it. *Columbus Enquirer*, Sept. 1, 22, 1832.

74. *Banner of the Constitution*, Sept. 5, 1832.

75. *Georgian*, Sept. 4, 8, 11, 13, 18, 20, 22, 25, Oct. 4; *Banner of the Constitution*, Sept. 12, 1832.

76. Sept. 12, 1832.

every meeting to be against nullification which did not specifically declare for it by name. The editor somewhat overdrew the picture in this glowing summary: "The project has already failed every where, but in Clarke and Oglethorpe. And why did it succeed there? Because the Nullies all assembled at Athens and Lexington. Those assemblies were not *made up* of the people of those two countries—they did not represent the true voices of those counties. It has failed in Bibb, in Jasper, in Hall, in Walton, in Coweta, in Richmond (Augusta). It will fail in all the most populous counties of the up-country. It cannot live in the mountainous air—it will not even find an infected district there—it has died in the middle grounds—and should it ever reach them, the *pine woods* will *murder* it, as quick as they would a *wolf* or a *panther*, from Wilkinson, Houston, and Dooly to the Florida line and the east coast."⁷⁷

The general elections carried out in October were instrumental in giving wholesome direction to the people's thoughts and in giving some indication as to how the state stood on nullification. In reality the campaign was more valuable as an educating force than the actual election returns a sure indication. Those opposed to nullification took the offensive and carried on an effective campaign against the nullifiers. The latter were branded as "opponents to President Jackson's administration, as adherents to John C. Calhoun, and as traitors to their country."⁷⁸ They were accused of proscribing two of Georgia's most fearless men and patriots for voting in favor of the tariff bill of 1832.⁷⁹ The Richmond County meeting in Augusta made an effort to force the candidates for Congress to run on a platform of principles rather than on the blind popularity of being a Troup or a Clark man. Most of them were smoked out of their hiding places, and some in long and laborious reasoning attempted to obscure in words their real position.⁸⁰ Judge Clayton and Seaborn Jones came out for doctrines easily construed into nulli-

77. Quoted in *Richmond Enquirer*, Aug. 31, 1832.

78. *Georgia Messenger*, Sept. 27, 1832. At this election members of Congress, of the State Legislature, and for the Milledgeville convention were chosen.

79. Forsyth and Wayne were the two Georgia Congressmen who had voted for the tariff bill of 1832.

80. *Banner of the Constitution*, Oct. 31, 1832.

fication. This new procedure of forcing a candidate to tell what he stood for was resented by many. Why should not the knowledge of a candidate's being either a Troup or a Clark man be sufficient? The Monroe County meeting condemned the "*proscriptive resolutions of the late meeting at Augusta, which has clothed a Committee of Three with the authority of catechising our candidates for Congress and the State Legislature, on the subject of political faith. . . .*"⁸¹

The Clark party bore the general reputation of standing out for the Union with more devotion than the Troup men. They first discovered the effectiveness of the argument that could be wielded against nullification, and so they eagerly seized it to use against the Troup party. Many of the latter strongly denied being in favor of nullification—they were only standing up for the rights of the States.⁸² In reality the old unreasoning personal attachments were crumbling in both parties before the more rational views on measures. An appeal was made to both parties by strong Union men to "Forget your differences. Unite in one cause—and arrest the fatal delusion, which threatens to leave you nothing worth quarelling about in the future. Select Union Men from your mutual ranks, and give them your hearty support."⁸³ The election returns for Congressmen meant little. The movement toward party disintegration had started too late to get very far before this election. A majority of those elected were Troup men, and according to the *Georgia Telegraph*, "though ostensibly the contest has been all about measures, it would seem by the result to be all about men. Thus Wayne and Wilde have been elected because they were not nullifiers, and Clayton and Jones, (by the same party), because they were!"⁸⁴ In the election of delegates for the Milledgeville convention, the nullifiers found little consolation. Of the counties that elected delegates, many stood out against this doctrine. Twenty counties refused to take any part whatso-

81. *Georgian*, Sept. 4, 15; *Macon Telegraph*, Sept. 5, 1832.

82. *Southern Recorder*, Aug. 30; *Georgian*, Sept. 25, 1832.

83. *Richmond Enquirer*, Aug. 14, 1832.

84. Oct. 17, 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, Nov. 6, 1832. The *Augusta Courier* believed "This election furnishes no evidence of the State's sentiments in regard to the politics of the day. It was a common thing at the election to hear Union men saying, I cannot give up men with whom I have acted all my life." Quoted in *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, p. 41, also see pp. 83, 113.

ever in the convention, through the non-election of delegates. This was generally interpreted to mean that they were opposed to nullification.⁸⁵ The ardor of the strongest nullifiers was much dampened. The *Augusta Chronicle*, which had been preaching straightout nullification since the subject had become uppermost in South Carolina, greatly calmed down. "For our own part," it said, "we have no attachment to Nullification, beyond an honest conviction of its *truth* and *efficacy*, and if convinced of its error or inefficiency, would unhesitatingly and publicly abandon it in a moment."⁸⁶

The convention came together in Milledgeville on November 12, with 131 delegates present representing sixty counties out of the eighty at that time. The State House of Representatives, which had already begun its session, after a sharp debate agreed to let the convention use its chamber. Many legislators opposed this action for fear it might mean the recognition of the convention.⁸⁷ The political ability and statesmanship of the State were here gathered together.⁸⁸ South Carolina, whose nullification convention had not yet met, was watching closely. Two South Carolina representatives, Chancellor Harper and David Johnson, representing the State Rights and Union parties respectively, were admitted to the floor.⁸⁹ The strong State rights element captured the meeting at the start. Ex-Governor Gilmer was made chairman, and a steering committee of twenty-one was appointed. A motion to postpone the selection of this committee was defeated by a vote of 52 to 67, the former number representing the full strength of the Union men.⁹⁰ Forsyth, fearing

85. The *Constitutionalist*, October 16, 1832, declared that "The general indifference, if not aversion, to the proposed Convention in our State, evidenced by the non-election of delegates, is a very satisfactory proof that Georgia is not at all disposed to any violent policy."

86. Oct. 20, 1832.

87. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, p. 194; L. L. Knight, *Georgia and Georgians* (Chicago, 1917), I, 569, 570; *Constitutionalist*, Dec. 7, 1832.

88. The hostile *Macon Telegraph* said, "The little politicians, who make such conspicuous figures in their own domestic spheres at home, and have tried to swell themselves into consequence here, are brought down to their own level. By the side of Forsyth and Berrien, and Cumming, &c., &c., they shrink into the shade, like stars at noonday. Berrien is the great luminary of the nullifiers, around whom the lesser lights move at an humble distance. . . ." This paper continued in a ridiculous vein, "And yet, this august assembly has done little else than look at each other, and themselves—drink apple toddy, and visit the theatre. Some speechifying has taken place upon preliminary questions, in which several delegates distinguished themselves beyond all conception, and fairly astonished themselves by the overwhelming floods of their own oratory." Nov. 21, 1832.

89. *Southern Recorder*, Nov. 22, 1832.

90. *Ibid.*, Nov. 15.

that the convention might attempt to force through a radical program, immediately began obstructionist moves. He introduced a motion to appoint a committee of five to thoroughly examine the credentials of the delegates, the resolutions under which they were elected, the number of votes given them at the election, and the full number of voters in every county; also requiring a submission of the correspondence carried on with other States by the committee appointed at the original Athens meeting. The last feature was, undoubtedly, an attempt to unearth the part South Carolina had been playing in the movement, and, thereby prejudice the convention against nullification at the very beginning. This motion was defeated after a long and memorable debate, whereupon Forsyth after offering a protest which was not allowed to be read, followed by fifty others, solemnly and silently arose and marched from the hall. This secession was permanent. After the adoption of a series of seventeen resolutions, the convention adjourned on the seventeenth. "The Rump Convention has just adjourned," said the *Georgia Telegraph*, "—Their actings and doings, and all their mighty works will doubtless be found in the books of the Chronicles. . . Thus has ended this great bubble. Well may it be said, a mountain was in labor, and brought forth a mouse!"⁹¹

This secession together with the general attitude of opposition the State had shown in numerous ways, greatly sobered the convention. As to its Union principles, it resolved, "That the people of Georgia are sincerely attached to the Federal Constitution and to the Union of these States. . . ." It also assumed a conciliatory attitude toward the tariff and the manufacturer. It declared that "they are willing that the reduction and equalization of duties which they ask should be prospective and gradual, and fearfully admonished, as they have been by experience of the fallacy of their past hopes for relief from the evils under which they suffer, they

91. *Southern Recorder*, Nov. 22, 1832. David Johnson, the representative of the Union Party of South Carolina, left the hall with the seceders. The refusal of the convention to allow Forsyth's protest to be read was a clever move of Berrien's. By refusing to have it read, he thereby prevented any official note being taken of its content, and kept it from being broadcast over the State with the journals of the meeting. S. F. Miller, *Bench and Bar in Georgia* (Philadelphia, 1858), II, 31-34. Twenty thousand copies of the proceedings of the convention were ordered printed and distributed. *Georgia Telegraph*, Nov. 21, 1832.

will still look to the justice and patriotism of their brethren of the manufacturing states." ⁹²

The adjournment was not *sine die*, as was to be expected, but only for eight months. This would be a standing threat, it was supposed, unless a change were brought about in the tariff. This line of procedure aroused the strong opposition of many Georgians, who declared that it was an unheard-of thing and a revolutionary performance. In the meantime, the meeting would take the sense of the people on the work already accomplished. Books were to be opened in every county to receive the signatures of approval or disapproval of the convention's action. If a majority should be found in support of the convention, then in the following February (1833) an election was to be held to select eleven delegates to a Southern convention. This convention was to be composed of representatives from as many Southern States as could be induced to enter the movement.⁹³ Some believed this was only another attempt to join Georgia with South Carolina, as it was possible that these would be the only States that would act.⁹⁴ Before adjourning the convention appointed a committee of five of which Berrien and Clayton were members "to prepare an address to the people of Georgia, illustrating the objects and proceedings of that body." It published a long address against the tariff, supporting a Southern convention as the remedy.

Upon the withdrawal of the Forsyth delegates from the convention they began a strong campaign of opposition against the work of that body. The protest offered by Forsyth on withdrawing, which the convention refused to have read and thereby incorporated into its proceedings, recited the charges that impelled the secession. It declared that the convention represented a minority of the people of the State, despite the claims of some supporters that the delegates represented "three-fourths, if not four-fifths, or five-sixths" of

92. *Southern Recorder*, Nov. 22, 1832; Jan. 10, 1833.

93. *Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1832.

94. "In such a scheme," a committee of the Forsyth seceders maintained, "we can perceive only the convenient means of drawing Georgia into a league with the nullifiers of South Carolina." *Ibid.*, Dec. 13, 1832; *Columbus Enquirer*, Dec. 15, 1832.

the total population.⁹⁵ It also charged that twenty counties "disapprove the convention by declining to elect delegates," and that the convention stood convicted of a guilty conscience in refusing to allow the credentials of its membership to be scrutinized.⁹⁶ The Forsyth seceders issued later an address to the people denouncing the convention's proceedings as designed "to bring Georgia into the toils of South Carolina, and deliver her people *en masse* to the demon of nullification," and declaring that "the union is in danger" and that the "energy of every friend to the union is demanded to counteract and defeat the impending evil."⁹⁷ The convention supporters defended their position with energy. They claimed that of all times when Georgia should be most united and determined, certain factions were dissipating the strength of the State's protest, "that they have sought, and have in some degree succeeded in drawing a line where none should exist."⁹⁸ They declared that Forsyth had adopted a rule or ruin policy, "improper, unwise, and against the best interests of the country, and deserving the disapprobation of the *people*."⁹⁹ They accused them of being vile submissionists who would not even go so far as to endorse a Southern convention. "'We have fallen on evil times.'—", bemoans the *Georgia Messenger*, "Georgia expects every citizen to do his duty—the watchword is RESISTANCE NOW, or SLAVERY HEREAFTER. He that is for STATE RIGHTS will support the proceedings of the Convention—he that is for VILE SUBMISSION will follow the seceders."¹⁰⁰

95. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 10, 1833; Dec. 20, 1832; *Georgian*, Nov. 17, 1832; *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, pp. 221, 222. The convention supporters claimed that out of a total population of 444,164 the delegates to the convention represented 305,552. *Georgian*, Nov. 16, 1832. An address issued by the seceders said, "If they are to try so vital a question in their own form, by their own agents, and to be themselves the final judges of the decision, what is there which a minority may not assume?" *Columbus Enquirer*, Dec. 15, 1832. For a time the chief issue in party politics was the withdrawal of the Forsyth faction. Numerous county meetings were held on the question. The Monroe County meeting resolved that South Carolina had "rushed upon a rash, unconstitutional and dangerous policy—one calculated to destroy the fairest hopes of liberty and subvert the wisest, happiest Government ever devised by the wisdom of man. . . ." It highly approved the course of Forsyth. Miller, *Bench and Bar in Georgia*, II, 34, 35.

96. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, 221, 222.

97. *Ibid.*, 231.

98. *Georgian*, Nov. 23, 1832.

99. *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 13, 20, 1832.

100. Nov. 22, 1832. The *Athens Banner*, quoted in *Georgian*, Dec. 18, 1832, in speaking of the proposed Southern convention, said, "He who can object to this mild procedure is prepared for slavish submission; and yet Mr. Forsyth, Col. Cumming and Alfred Cuthbert could not venture even to *deliberate* with those who suggested action so revolutionary as this."

The burning question of discussion after adjournment soon came to be, whether or not the convention declared for nullification, and even if it did not, whether it was not strongly in sympathy with it. The fifth resolution came exceedingly close to a declaration of these doctrines. It declared that the powers to interpret the Federal Constitution "cannot belong to the agent, since that would be to substitute his judgment for the constitutional limitation, and that in the absence of a common arbiter expressly designated by the Constitution for this purpose, Each State as such, and in virtue of its sovereignty is necessarily admitted to the exercise of that right." William H. Crawford claimed that this was nullification.¹⁰¹ Berrien quickly denied the charge. He claimed the resolutions went no further than the Georgia Legislature had gone in 1828 and at other times.¹⁰² There were many others like Berrien, men who had an extreme hatred for the tariff and a strong desire to uphold the ultimate right of a State to judge a Federal law, but who were not willing to bear the incubus of being nullifiers. There was likewise a considerable group, though fewer in numbers, who declared that the convention had nullified the tariff, and that it did the proper thing. The *Columbia Times*, a South Carolina paper, declared, "Nullification is not avowed by name in the report, but it is therein resolved that in the last resort, the States, and not the General Government, have the right to judge of infractions of the Constitution, and to choose the mode of redress. This is the most important principle of the Nullifiers of South Carolina. . . ." The *Constitutionalist* agreed with this statement, claiming that "Nullification was as unequivocally maintained . . . as if avowed by name."¹⁰³ The *Macon Telegraph* declared that though the resolutions "go against the Tariff, and in favor of a Southern Convention, which is

101. *Georgian*, Nov. 21, 1832. In a letter to John Taylor, Crawford said, "I hold that no State shall stand justified in the sight of Heaven who shall resort to revolutionary measures to change the existing order of things until it has exhausted all constitutional measures of obtaining redress. That nullification and seceding from the Union are revolutionary measures cannot, I think, admit of a rational doubt. The strongest objection I have to the Carolina doctrine is that its authors have deceitfully and hypocritically represented both measures to be constitutional and peaceable. They must have known better, and therefore acted dishonestly." Shipp, *Life of William H. Crawford*, 208.

102. *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 20, 1832.

103. Nov. 30, 1832.

well enough, they breathe nullification and sedition from beginning to end." ¹⁰⁴

Two days after the Milledgeville convention adjourned, South Carolina's nullification convention met. There was a certain underground connection between the nullification sympathizers in both States, which had indications in the presence of Chancellor Harper in the Georgia meeting. It was charged by some Georgians that the Milledgeville nullifiers sent a messenger to the South Carolina convention urging it to adopt nullification as a method to stir up and inflame Georgia in that direction.¹⁰⁵ But the work and importance of the Milledgeville convention rapidly melted away. In most of the counties the books for signatures were never opened. An effort was made in Muscogee County to take the popular will; but no report on the attempt seems to have ever been made.¹⁰⁶ The committee appointed to hold the polls in Oglethorpe County resigned with the explanation "that events, subsequent to their adjournment, have entirely changed the aspect of political affairs, and are now calling for other and speedier remedies, than those they proposed."¹⁰⁷ Judge Berrien laboriously defended the convention, stating that subsequent events rendered the fulfillment of its program unnecessary.¹⁰⁸ But in general the convention came to be to those who had fathered it a greater liability than an asset.

The popular spontaneous method, more or less induced by self-appointed leaders, of dealing with the tariff and Federal relations, had, thus, to a great extent, failed to produce tangible results. The attitude of the people as expressed in their political and governmental organization played a very important part. Governor Lumpkin, elected through a strong sentiment against nullification, carried out a consistent program of opposition to it. His annual message of November, 1832, on the eve of the meeting of the Milledgeville convention, carried a strong indictment of the heresy. "The mystical doctrine of nullification," he said, "as contended for by its

104. Nov. 21, 1832.

105. *Richmond Enquirer*, Dec. 15, 1832.

106. Miller, *Bench and Bar in Georgia*, 1, 40; *Columbus Enquirer*, March 30, 1833.

107. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 10, 1833.

108. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1833.

advocates, has only tended to bewilder the minds of the people, inflame their passions, and prepare them for anarchy and revolution. Wherever it spreads, it engenders the most bitter strifes and animosities, and dissolves the most endearing relations of life. I believe nullification to be unsound, dangerous and delusive, in practice as well as theory." He counselled that "forbearance and moderation be made manifest to the whole Union, before we enter upon any doubtful or violent remedy calculated to jeopardize the existence of the Federal Union itself."¹⁰⁹ This attack by the governor of the State undoubtedly had a tremendous sobering effect on many of the delegates who were soon to meet in the very hall where the message had been read. How could an extra-legal body, with doubts as to its representing the people of the State, expect to succeed in forcing nullification on the State in the face of such certain opposition from the State government? Well may the convention have pondered on the success of such a venture.

The Legislature, thus in session during the period of the convention, was able to follow with a critical eye every move of that body. As soon as the convention adjourned, its work became the subject of the most bitter discussion in the Legislature, almost to the exclusion of ordinary business. Many legislators resented the apparent usurpation by an extra-legal convention of powers that they considered belonged to their body. A set of resolutions, known as the Ryan resolutions, was introduced in the latter part of November and passed by both houses soon thereafter. In a very positive tone, they condemned the recent convention, and declared for a convention of the Southern States with certain limitations to settle the disturbing questions. It was resolved, "That we earnestly advise our fellow-citizens, not to give their votes on the Resolutions of the Convention recently adjourned, as therein proposed. The Convention manifestly consisted of delegates from a minority of the people; yet they submit their acts for ratification to the whole people, according to a form, *contrived by themselves* through the agency of persons *appointed by themselves*, while *they themselves* remain final judges of

109. Lumpkin, *Removal of the Cherokee Indians*, I, 122, 124.

the ratification proposed.¹¹⁰ As a method of tariff redress, a Southern convention was proposed, to be made up of representatives from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. This would secure common action, which was one of the cardinal principles of the Union element. It was specifically stated that "The Convention shall not take place unless five States of the six, which it is proposed to invite, assent to the proposal."¹¹¹ This was in conformity with Governor Lumpkin's views that it was not advisable "for a single State, upon her separate action, to undertake to force a redress of grievances from the Federal Government, while her sister States equally interested, are not even consulted as to the policy to be pursued. . . . Separate action upon this subject is calculated to engender strife and disunion, anarchy and confusion among brethren of the same principles."¹¹²

The Legislature was in no mood of toleration. It passed the Ryan resolutions in the Senate 49 to 29 and in the House 97 to 57. It rejected by large majorities less severe resolutions. It paid its compliments to nullification thus: "Resolved, That we abhor the doctrine of Nullification as neither a peaceable, nor a constitutional remedy, but, on the contrary, as tending to civil commotion and disunion; and while we deplore the rash and revolutionary measures, recently adopted by a convention of the people of South Carolina, we deem it as paramount duty to warn our fellow citizens against the danger of adopting her mischievous policy."¹¹³ Jackson's nullification proclamation of December 10th was heartily concurred in. The Senate believing it to be its "bounden duty to disseminate, forthwith, the views and determinations of the President on this momentous and melancholy catastrophe, amongst the good people of this State," resolved to have four thousand copies of the proclamation printed for the Senators to distribute.¹¹⁴ A few days previous to this, Governor Lumpkin placed before the Legislature the proceedings of the

110. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, pp. 279, 280; *Southern Recorder*, Nov. 29, 1832.

111. *Georgian*, Dec. 3, 1832; Ames, *State Documents*, 179.

112. Lumpkin, *Removal of the Cherokees*, I, 123.

113. Ames, *State Documents*, 180; *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, 280; *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 6, 27, 1832.

114. *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 27, 1832; *Georgia Messenger*, Dec. 27, 1832.

South Carolina nullification convention without comment, taking occasion, however, to quote sentiments for the Union from Washington's Farewell Address.¹¹⁵

This whole line of procedure was bitterly resented by those who had supported the Milledgeville convention. They interpreted it as a studied effort to discredit and destroy them, rather than as expressions of political convictions or love for the Union. They declared that the Ryan resolutions were hatched secretly in the dead of night in a dingy Milledgeville tavern by Dennis L. Ryan and the Forsyth seceders. The Legislature was accused of having "thrown a fire-brand among the people, wantonly insulted a large portion of their fellow-citizens, and denounced a sovereign State."¹¹⁶ As for the Southern convention proposed by the Legislature, it was an effort to defeat the will of the people since it would be an impossibility to assemble one on that plan.¹¹⁷ The convention proposed by the nullification sympathizers would be competent to proceed when two or more States should be represented. As before stated, the convention provided for by the Ryan resolutions required six States to be present before the convention should be able to transact business. This limitation was especially designed to prevent any danger of South Carolina and Georgia nullifiers uniting forces and proceeding to nullify in the name of a Southern convention. Against Jackson's nullification proclamation and the action of the Georgia Legislature concerning it, the Georgia nullifiers were equally bitter. Said one, "It is *Jackson* who issued it, and because it is Jackson, both our Governor and Legislature sit as tamely under it, as if nothing had happened. . . . Jackson has done much for the country, for which he is entitled to, and possesses our gratitude; but if he had done ten thousand times as much, this Proclamation should not be submitted to."¹¹⁸ A Clarke County meeting declared it was a "high-handed assumption of unconstitutional power," and refused

115. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 43, p. 280.

116. *Georgia Messenger*, Dec. 20, 1832.

117. *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 6, 1832.

118. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 3, 1833; Feb. 20. Many with great reluctance found themselves disagreeing with Jackson. They felt that he had deserted Georgians generally. Said the *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 27, 1832, "The President goes alike against Unionists and Nullifiers; and is directly at war with all the State Right defenders, the Jeffersonian Republicans." Also see *ibid.*, Feb. 20, 1833.

by an overwhelming majority to pass resolutions against nullification and in support of Jackson.

South Carolina in her course of nullification had not only succeeded in drawing from Jackson his proclamation in December, but had also provoked in the following March the passage of the so-called Force Bill. Georgia nullification sympathizers immediately began to solemnly protest against it. Citizens of Taliaferro County, in a meeting, declared that this "bloody bill" was "arbitrary and despotic, and amounts virtually to a repeal of the constitution."¹¹⁹ Dinners were given to the Congressmen who voted against the bill where Forsyth and Wayne, who voted for it, were severely condemned. In Macon, Forsyth was burned in effigy. The grand jury of one county presented him for his vote and demanded his resignation, declaring that they could not "find language strong enough to express our disapprobation of such apostate conduct. . . ."¹²⁰ The grand jury of another county declared that it could not "forget to present the names of those Georgia Representatives, who have deceived their constituents, and identified themselves with the Ultra-Federalists, Tariffites, and Blue-light gentry of the North. . . . Mr. Wayne is a satellite of Mr. Forsyth, and a sycophant admirer and favorite of Andrew Jackson."¹²¹

The hand of South Carolina was not altogether absent from many of these later doings in Georgia, where she still had many sympathizers. A meeting of Troup County citizens in December, 1832, resolved that South Carolina's cause was their cause and that they could not "remain indifferent spectators of a contest between the state of South Carolina and the general government."¹²² The students at the University of Georgia declared that they viewed "with joy the proud stand taken by Carolina against federal usurpation, and reprobate the character of the resolutions passed by our deluded legislature. . . ."¹²³ Newspaper support was also not

119. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 44, 202.

120. *Ibid.*, 107, 115; *Southern Recorder*, Oct. 16, 1833. A minority of the jurors dissented, deploring "the introduction of politics in our presentments."

121. *Southern Recorder*, April 24, 1833. Troup, who was at this time a United States Senator, said, "If on my death-bed, I would have been carried there to vote against it." He was here referring to the Force Bill. Harden, *Life of George M. Troup*, 518, 519.

122. *Georgia Messenger*, Jan. 24, 1833.

123. *Ibid.*, Feb. 21.

lacking. "Let the world know," warns the *Georgia Messenger*, "THAT CAROLINA SHALL NOT BE PUT DOWN for resenting the unlawful exercise of undelegated power, so long as Georgia can raise an arm in her defense. . . ." It counselled that sentiments of resistance should "echo from the Chattahoochee to the Savannah, and reverberate from the mountains to the sea-board, and you *may yet be free*."¹²⁴ This sympathy and support was loud and persistent but its following was small. The great majority agreed with the *Georgia Telegraph* that "South Carolina stands on the brink of a frightful precipice—if she chooses to leap off, it is her business—though we hope she may survive the experiment. Because Sam Patch jumped down the Cataract of Niagara, is no reason that everybody should."¹²⁵

The most bitterly attacked move made by South Carolina during the period directly following her nullification of the tariff was the appearance of George McDuffie as chief speaker at the commencement exercises of the University of Georgia in August of 1833. He was secured by the nullification sympathizers of the State, and was, according to report, to have been accompanied by Calhoun. The latter did not appear. In his address McDuffie praised South Carolina's course and condemned Jackson and the Federal Government. He took particular pains to ridicule the spineless individuals who professed State rights principles but never favored acting on them. According to the *Georgia Messenger*, "He said it was true he knew some who said, in case of palpable and oppressive violations of the Constitution of the United States by Congress, that they would petition, and if that would not do, why then they would remonstrate, and if that did not answer and remove the unconstitutional oppression, why they would *protest*."¹²⁶ The appearance of McDuffie in Georgia and especially the content of his speech created a great uproar in State politics. The explanations that he was a Georgian by birth and that he appeared at the commencement on account of the graduation of a kinsman were declared beside the point. The Union men claimed that Calhoun

124. *Ibid.*, Jan. 3.

125. Dec. 12, 1832.

126. Aug. 15, 1833; *Southern Recorder*, Aug. 28, 1833.

and McDuffie were meddling in Georgia politics and that they had almost taken "the lead in the present electioneering campaign from the hands of our own citizens, and in our own state."¹²⁷ "If the nullifiers can prove to us," said the *Constitutionalist*, "that the talents of Mr. Calhoun, General Hamilton, or Mr. McDuffie, are far superior to those possessed by any of our Georgians, there might be some excuse for calling on these gentlemen to meddle with our local parties."¹²⁸ The grand jury of Talbot County made this meddling the subject of a presentment, warning "our fellow-citizens, to watch their movements with a jealous eye, as treason not unfrequently lurks under the garb of professed patriotism."¹²⁹ Governor Lumpkin wrote Lewis Cass that he was "fully aware and alive to the unhallowed and unprincipled course now in operation, by the nullifiers, and old friends of the Hartford Convention, and the great efforts now making by their hireling presses, to identify Georgia with South Carolina, both in principle and action."¹³⁰ The Georgia nullifiers were tactless in inviting South Carolinians to make political speeches in Georgia; the South Carolinians were unwise in accepting, as they invariably stirred up anew the smoldering prejudices of Georgians against them.

Although the nullification movement had received a rude setback in the outcome of the Milledgeville convention and in the rough handling the doctrines had received at the hands of the Legislature, the question could not be considered definitely settled until the people of the State should speak formally in a popular election. That opportunity was found in the State elections that were to be held in October of 1833. As already stated, elections heretofore had centered around personalities with little regard to fundamental principles peculiar to the State, and with no consideration for questions of national policy. Heretofore, Georgians had presented for the most part a solid front on national affairs. But the bitter discussions for the past four or five years had set many people to

127. *Constitutionalist*, Aug. 13, 1833.

128. Aug. 13, 1833.

129. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 18, 1833.

130. Letter to Lewis Cass, Jan. 2, 1833, in Lumpkin, *Removal of the Cherokees*, I, 196, 197. Lumpkin declared that he was utterly unable to understand how anybody could say that Georgia had been using the same weapon in her late troubles with the Federal Government that South Carolina was now proposing to use.

thinking less about men and more about measures; yet there had not come a clear-cut division on principles up to this time. Personalities were rapidly melting away before the onslaughts of rational convictions. The rise of nullification discussions may, therefore, be held responsible for the emerging of two political groups based on principles, which came to be known as the Union and State Rights parties. Hezekiah Niles (in *Niles' Register*) gave a fairly true statement when he said, "These parties now called *union* and *state rights*, were heretofore arrayed under the name of *Clark* and *Troup* parties—but what they differed about we never fully understood; and the present arrangement, we think, have a more intimate relation to the doctrines concerning *nullification* than to the *political* parties, proper, which generally divide the people of the United States."¹³¹

The nucleus of the State Rights party is seen in numerous county meetings that sprang up after the Milledgeville convention. They were based on strong State rights principles and directed their attention against the moves of Jackson in the South Carolina troubles. They generally gave themselves the name, *Free Trade and State Rights Association*.¹³² The course of these coalescing groups into the State Rights party was difficult. The main trouble was on the degree of opposition that should be directed against Jackson. The President had won so strong a position in the affections of Georgians on account of his dealings with the Supreme Court on the Indian question, that opposition to him at first became a dangerous and uncertain course. The result was that the wiser leaders professed no enmity at all for Jackson, but were merely objecting to his specific acts in crushing the nullification movement in South Carolina. They rather used the tactics of accusing the Union party of forsaking the traditional position of the South on State rights and of forswear-

131. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 47, pp. 117, 118. Concerning the Georgia parties in earlier times, Niles had said, "We do not know what the people are differing about. Perhaps they are touched with the old politics of New York, by which persons were transformed from Democrats to Federalists, or *vice versa*, while sleeping in their beds . . . as the magician worked his wand." *Ibid.*, Vol. 41, p. 237. The *Southern Recorder* declared that "the party lines are . . . clearly drawn, so distinctly indeed, that no man can mistake his course. . . ." Nov. 20, 1833.

132. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 3, 1833. The "Twiggs County Free Trade and State Right Association" was formed in February, 1833, "to promulgate . . . Political doctrines taught by Jefferson." *Southern Recorder*, Feb. 6, 1833.

ing Jeffersonian principles. But the more radical elements boldly condemned Jackson and declared for nullification outright. They, however, made up a minority of the State Rights party. One of them, signing the *nom de plume* of "Patric Henry," declared the State Rights party candidate for Governor, Joel Crawford, was against nullification and ought to be defeated. "When it is announced from high places," he continued, "that *nullification* is rapidly passing away in Georgia; and when a candidate for the government has been selected, because *he is not a nullifier*, to oppose the present incumbent—Is it not time to take our stand and breast the storm . . . ? Let the *nullifiers* awake from their slumber. . . . The People of Georgia at HEART are nullifiers."¹³³ Others claimed that if Crawford did not come out solidly for nullification, he would not poll eight thousand votes.¹³⁴ But the State Rights party as a whole labored hard to dispel the charge made by the Union party of personal opposition to Jackson and support of nullification doctrines.¹³⁵

The Union party stood for Jackson and against nullification. It embraced a great group of people who held vigorous State rights principles, but who were strongly against jeopardizing the Union. Pre-eminently it was the party of those who had an unwavering attachment to Jackson. Their candidate was Lumpkin, who was at that time Governor. The election resulted in the choice of Lumpkin by a substantial majority.¹³⁶ This marked the death-blow to nullification. In fact the greatest dangers of the doctrine being actually applied had been averted in the passage of the Compromise Tariff of 1833. In this election Georgia showed that she would not even give it her academic support. And, although the danger was never great after the adjournment of the Milledgeville convention, this election condemned it beyond resurrection. Governor Lumpkin, who had combatted the heresy since it first arose, considered the final victory had been won in his re-election. He referred to the movement in

133. *Georgia Messenger*, July 25, 1833. Some accused Crawford of straddling on the nullification issue. *Ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1833.

134. The nullifiers threatened to bring out a candidate of their own unless Crawford declared specifically for nullification. *Georgia Messenger*, July 25, 1833.

135. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 30, Sept. 11, Nov. 13, 1833.

136. *Niles' Register*, Vol. 45, p. 115.

his annual message of November, 1833, as follows, "That the value of our Federal Union should have become a familiar subject of calculation is truly alarming, and argues little for the patriotism of those who encourage discussions upon such a subject. . . . The people may alter and change, as to them may seem fit; but that they would destroy that mighty governmental fabric, reared by the toils and cemented by the blood of their fathers—merely for the aggrandizement of selfish demagogues and strife-stirring politicians—is not to be expected."¹³⁷ In his second inaugural address, he said that state and nation "should be kept strictly within their respective constitutional spheres, and, finally, that he who would destroy the sovereignty of the States by *consolidation*, or the Federal Union by *nullification*, is a traitor to liberty, and deserves the universal execration of mankind."¹³⁸ An effort in the Georgia Senate in December, 1833, to censure Jackson was defeated 49 to 30.¹³⁹ In his annual message in November, 1835, Lumpkin chronicled the passing of the dark days and predicted for the future a bright prospect. "We can now look back," he said, "upon the agitations and political storms that arose out of the Tariff, Internal Improvement, Indian and Bank questions, and rejoice that these dark and gloomy days have passed, and our form of government is still the admiration of the civilized world, and our people pre-eminent in happiness and prosperity."¹⁴⁰

Nullification was a failure in Georgia for a number of reasons. In the early stages of the movement it was discredited among many because of South Carolina's connection with it. Georgia had a genuine love and respect for the Union and she was willing to make sacrifices for its continuance. Those who would have gone the full length of nullification never approached a majority at any time. In the latter period of the movement new elements entered into consideration when Jackson took his strong stand against it. Georgians had now to make a choice between support of Jackson and nullification. The President's peculiar esteem in Georgia was

137. Lumpkin, *Removal of the Cherokee Indians*, I, 180.

138. *Ibid.*, 142.

139. *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 4, 1833.

140. Lumpkin, *Removal of the Cherokee Indians*, I, 180.

destined to easily win. The time of greatest danger in the movement was the period of four months directly preceding the Milledgeville convention. It was during this time that the decision was made, and that by the people thinking for themselves. And the problem was to a great extent thought out on its own merits as the question of supporting Jackson did not at this time play a determinant part. So when the convention met, the fate of the movement had already been decided. Nullification was not entrenched in the government in Georgia as was the case in South Carolina. It attempted to rise spontaneously from the people and through machinery of its own, unknown to the law, settle the future policy of the State. It met in the organized government an unyielding obstacle. Had the government been permeated with the doctrine like South Carolina, the outcome would have likely been different. The movement had the direct result of giving the State two political parties based on political principles instead of men. Within a few years the subject ceased to be discussed, but it left as a heritage a keener appreciation of the nation that was not to be wholly forgotten when Georgia was calculating the value of the Union a quarter of a century later.